the first time raised French prose into a literary medium of the highest order; elevated everyday life and personal happenings into a subject-matter for great literature; and'invented the essay form, in which the French were afterwards to excel. But what were the elements that went to make up this great Frenchman of letters, Michel Eyquem de Montaigne? His father's name, *Eyquem,* he claimed to be of English origin, deriving perhaps from the village of Ockham. His mother, on the other hand, was Antoinette Louppes, or Lopez, and was one of a Spanish family established at Bordeaux. A recent discovery has proved that her progenitors belonged to a New Christian family of Calatayud; that more than one of them had suffered at the hands of the Inquisition; and that they descended ultimately from the Jewish clan of Pazag6n. It is, possibly, to this admixture of blood that the great essayist owed that slightly sceptical tone which seems to us to-day the most French of his qualities.[1]

Montaigne's influence in letters was, of course, immense. The new spirit which he introduced into European literature gave an impetus which is not perhaps exhausted even to-day. A licence for an English translation of the *Essais* was issued in London by the Stationers' Company in the very year of their publication in Paris. Shakespeare was acquainted with them, echoing the language sometimes, the thought more frequently.[2] Francis Bacon's elder brother knew the author personally; and the indebtedness of Bacon's Essays to

Montaigne's is constant throughout. It is a coincidence only that the classical
English translation of Montaigne's Essays was due to

[1] Of modern writers, Anatole France perhaps inherited this quality
to the fullest extent, and possessed most marked similarity to Montaigne; but France, too, is said to have had a Jewish grandmother.

[2] See especially Gonzalo's description of the ideal commonwealth
in *The Tempest* I. i, 147, which is nearer a paraphrase than a reminiscence of Florio's version of Montaigne.